



## PRESS RELEASE

### USAID ANNOUNCES NEW PROGRAM TO EMPOWER WORKERS IN BANGLADESH

**DHAKA, APRIL 26, 2015** -- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a three-year Worker Empowerment Program in Bangladesh to support labor rights, union organizing, and women's empowerment in the ready-made garment sector. The announcement coincides with the second anniversary of the April 24, 2013 Rana Plaza garment factory collapse in Dhaka that killed over 1,100 workers and injured over 2,500.

"USAID's Worker Empowerment Program demonstrates the United States' vigilance in promoting fundamental labor rights, including workplace safety and health, so tragedies such as Rana Plaza can be prevented in the future," said Jonathan Stivers, USAID Assistant Administrator for Asia. "We have partnered with the Government of Bangladesh, international donors, and the garment industry to empower workers by giving them a real voice in this vital sector and to reform labor laws consistent with international standards."

The new Worker Empowerment Program aims to strengthen the capacity of independent workers' organizations by empowering the workers in these organizations, and particularly women workers, with the skills and support necessary to protect their rights, promote their interests and improve conditions in their workplace and community.

This program complements the existing Global Labor Program that trains workers on labor laws, provides legal support to workers, and assists workers in organizing and registering new unions. Since inception, this program has registered nearly 300 new labor unions in the ready-made garments industry, covering more than 65,000 workers.

The European Union and the United States, in close cooperation with the ILO, will remain closely engaged with the Government of Bangladesh in the spirit of partnership to continue our work together to ensure that economic growth and sustainable development go hand-in hand with workers' safety and rights.

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